DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 172 714 HE 011 562

AUTHOR Barrett, Eve; Powell, John
TITLE Deferring Students Who Did Not Re-Enroll at the University of New South Wales in 1976. TERC Research and Development Paper No. 44.
INSTITUTION New South Wales Univ., Kensington (Australia). Tertiary Education Research Centre.
PUB DATE Dec 76
NOTE 27p.; Not available in paper copy due to marginal legibility of original document

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS College Admission; *College Attendance; *College Choice; *Followup Studies; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Student Application
IDENTIFIERS Australia; *University of New South Wales (Australia)

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at the University of New South Wales in Australia to determine what happened to applicants who deferred enrollment in 1975 and did not enroll in 1976 at the university. Additionally, information was sought about what deferring applicants thought they had gained from deferment and their opinions generally about the advantages and disadvantages of deferring. A questionnaire was mailed to deferring applicants, and further information was obtained from the admissions office and the computer printout of offers made by the Metropolitan Universities Admissions Centre. Based on a response rate of 63 percent, it was determined that about 74 percent of respondents were undertaking some form of postsecondary education. Analysis of findings is presented under three subheadings: students attending other universities, students attending any other postsecondary institution (including nursing), and persons not enrolled in any institution in 1976. Data indicate that most of the deferring applicants do continue to enroll in some form of higher education. Deferment policy and practices at the university are discussed, and a sample questionnaire is appended. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED172714

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PAPER No.44

ISBN 0313-5543

DEFERRING STUDENTS WHO DID NOT RE-ENROL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES IN 1976

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Eve Barrett

John Powell

HE011562

December 1976

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank the staff of the Admissions Section, and in particular Mr. John Beauchamp, for making available to us their records on deferring students. The information we have drawn from their files is marked by asterisks.

INTRODUCTION

One of the recent trends discernible in the enrolment statistics of Australian universities has been the increasing number of applicants requesting a deferment of their enrolment. This growing interest in deferment has coincided with an increased demand for entry into tertiary institutions, particularly universities. Despite the provision of more university places, demand has outstripped supply resulting in considerable competition for those places available. In consequence many universities have found it necessary to introduce quotas, particularly in faculties such as medicine and law, where there are more applicants than places. Many prospective students have come to believe, rightly or wrongly, that failure to take up an offered place in a university in a particular year may result in their not being admitted subsequently unless they receive some guarantee that their offer will be held over. Hence the considerable increase in requests for deferment which, at this University, rose from 66 in 1971 to 821 in 1976.*

However, figures available to date show that only an average of 26% of these deferring applicants enrolled at this University the following year in courses for which they had requested deferment.* Figures available from the University of Melbourne show that an average of 59% of students who deferred in 1973 and 1974 enrolled in the following years.[1] This is a higher figure than at this University but can be explained to some extent by the fact that the University of Melbourne only granted deferment at that time to those in the top 80% in the order of merit list. At Monash 44% of students deferring in 1973 enrolled in 1974.* However, tuition fees were abolished in 1974 and it is likely that some of the students deferring in 1973 were planning to take advantage of this. (In view of the proposed fee abolition in 1974, the University of New South Wales decided to offer deferment of a place in 1973 only in special circumstances. Consequently there were only 15 deferments granted.) Despite the somewhat better enrolment figures at these two universities, there is still, on the surface, a considerable loss in the prospective student population. These figures raise a number of issues about deferment.

Why do some applicants seek deferment? Why do some of those granted deferment subsequently enrol while others do not? What should be the University's policy on deferment? Should it be for one year, as at present, or would two years be better? And perhaps, looking to the future, how possible is it administratively to allow all students who succeed in gaining entry to the University in any one year to enter at some unspecified future time?

This report discusses some of the findings from a pilot study on 'deferment' which was carried out by the Tertiary Education Research Centre in 1976 to discover what happened to students who had sought deferment in 1975 but had not enrolled at this University in 1976.

DEFERMENT POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The University sees the advantages of allowing new students to defer enrolment in terms of increased maturity, more realistic appraisal of goals, and improved attitudes towards study at the university level. Consequently it has adopted a liberal policy in regard to deferment. Until 1973 all applications for deferment were referred individually to the Admissions Committee of the Professorial Board. However, as this was extremely time-consuming it was decided to set down a policy for deferment based on a review of the decisions made earlier by this Committee. A resolution of the Professorial Board[3] adopted a recommendation of the Admissions Committee stating:

> That deferment of enrolment in the first year of an undergraduate course (i.e. the applicant has not enrolled but has received an offer) be granted on application unless:
>
> (a) the applicant is enrolled at another tertiary institution,
>
> (b) deferment is sought for longer than one year, or
>
> (c) the applicant provides no reason for the request.

Table 1 lists the number of applications received for deferment, the number granted and the number enrolling the following year.

TABLE 1

1971 - 1976 DEFERMENTS

YEAR	NUMBER APPLYING TO DEFER COURSE	DEFERMENTS APPROVED	ENROLLED IN DEFERRED COURSE THE FOLLOWING YEAR	ENROLMENTS AS PERCENTAGE OF DEFERMENTS APPROVED
1971	66	50	28	56
1972	142	112	39	35
1973	245	x15	5	20
1974	345	253	64	25
1975	412	338	+67	20
1976	821	659	-	-
TOTALS	2029	1427	201	26

x Because course fees were to be abolished in 1974 the University decided to refuse to defer places offered in 1973 unless there were special circumstances.

• A further 28 enrolled in other courses at the University of New South Wale

Applicants granted a deferment are instructed to re-apply through the Metropolitan Universities Admissions Centre the following year. They are informed that the University will guarantee them a place in the Faculty in which they have been granted a deferment unless they have a higher preference and gain that preference the following year. This procedure ensures that the calculation of quota numbers is not made more difficult by reserving places that may not be taken up and allows for the possibility that deferring applicants may change their minds about what they prefer to study.

THE STUDY

This study was designed to find out what happened to applicants deferring in 1975 who did not enrol in 1976 in this University. Additionally it was hoped to elicit what they thought they had gained from deferment and their opinions generally about the advantages and disadvantages of deferring.

In August 1976 a questionnaire was mailed to all students listed by the Admissions Section as deferring and not enrolling that year. As response rates for mailed questionnaires are usually low a stamped addressed envelope was enclosed with the questionnaire so as to encourage those contacted to reply. Some loss in response rate was anticipated as

a number of those contacted would have left the listed address without leaving forwarding instructions. When the response rate reached about 50% (mid-October) a follow-up letter and questionnaire were mailed to non-respondents in the hope of increasing the response rate. At the same time it was envisaged that replies from the second mailing would indicate whether or not the responses from the second mailing differed from those received earlier. If they did not differ to any great extent it would suggest that responses from the rest of the population would be similar and this would compensate, to some extent, for a low response rate.

The questionnaire asked deferring applicants who had not enrolled at this University whether or not they were enrolled in any other tertiary institution at this time. If so, what was the institution and in what course were they enrolled? Those who were not enrolled in any tertiary institution were asked what they were doing now and what were their intentions as regards future tertiary study. Did they intend to enrol at a later date, and if so, when? All applicants, both those enrolled in tertiary institutions and those not, were asked what they did during 1975, what they thought they had gained from the year's deferment, and whether or not they had any regrets about not enrolling in 1975. A final question asked them what advice they would give to school leavers considering deferment. Apart from questions asking about their present status as students the questions were all open ended. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix 1.

In addition to the questionnaire data further information about deferring students was obtained from (1) the Admissions Office which maintains a list of such persons, their home addresses, the courses deferred, and their reasons for seeking deferment and (2) the computer print-out of offers made by the Metropolitan Universities Admissions Centre. This latter document also lists the aggregate marks obtained by applicants in the Higher School Certificate examination.

RESULTS

To date a total of 157 replies have been received in response to the 243 questionnaires mailed. However, six of these are from students currently enrolled at this University and two are from graduates. These have been excluded from any further analysis. Sixteen have been returned

"Address Unknown" and others may have gone astray. Thirty-two have been received since the second mailing of questionnaires thus improving the response rate further. In view of the difficulties involved in conducting postal surveys the response rate of 63% is considered reasonable. In addition, the pattern of responses evident in later returns is similar to that found in earlier returns. It is likely, therefore, that the data gathered so far are representative of the total population. Nevertheless, the level of responses must be kept in mind when any interpretation of the data is made.

About 74% of our respondents are undertaking some form of post-secondary education. (The distinction is made here between tertiary and post-secondary because, although we asked students about tertiary attendance, some of the courses being studied could not be classified as 'tertiary'.) This information is given in Table 2.

TABLE 2

PRESENT STATUS OF STUDENTS WHO DEFERRED IN 1975

n = 149

Attending:-	
Other universities	41
C.A.E.s (including Teachers Colleges)	30
Technical Colleges	14
Other institutions (e.g. to study music, art, etc.)	10
Studying overseas	3
Nurses	12
Not attending	39

Further analysis of the data is presented under three sub-headings - (i) students attending other universities, (ii) students attending any other post-secondary institution (including nursing) and (iii) persons not enrolled in any institution in 1976. This break-down has been carried out as there appear to be some differences, both in responses to the questionnaire and in background information, between respondents in these sub-groups.

Rather than lengthen the report by including quotes in the narrative, selected quotes have been categorised and are presented in Appendix 2.

(i) Students attending other universities in 1976

Students in this group differ in a number of ways from students in both the other two sub-groups. This became apparent initially when an analysis was made of home residence. Table 3 shows the percentage of respondents living in capital cities, towns and rural areas. A final column provides comperative figures for the 1st year population at the University of New South Wales in 1976.

TABLE 3

HOME RESIDENCE AT TIME OF DEFERMENT %

	Attending University	Attending Other Institution	Not Attending	Total Respondents	1976[4] 1st year Students U.N.S.W.
	n = 41	n = 69	n = 39	n = 149	n = 3519
Capital City	46.3	71.1	74.4	65.1	68.4
> 60,000	7.3	4.3	2.6	4.7	6.4
30,000-60,000	7.3	-	-	2.0	3.3
5,000-30,000	12.2	10.1	7.7	10.1	12.4
< 5,000	17.0	7.2	10.2	10.7	3.3
Rural	9.8	7.2	5.1	7.4	0.8
Overseas	-	-	-	-	3.7
No information	-	-	-	-	1.7

Students attending universities other than New South Wales are likely to live either in a capital city or in a small country town or rural area. In fact almost 27% live in towns of less than 5,000 or in rural areas. This percentage is far higher than that found in the University first year population as a whole. Those who reside in Sydney are likely to live on the North Shore and, in fact, not one of this group resides in either the eastern or southern suburbs of Sydney. Although the questionnaire did not ask why the respondent was not attending the University of New South Wales, it seems likely that place of residence has a significant influence on the final decision of where to enrol. Four

students from Canberra are attending A.N.U.; several from the New England District are enrolled at U.N.E.; others from country districts are attending universities that are smaller or less distant. Four more are attending universities where they can study their chosen course on a part-time basis, e.g. Arts at Wollongong, B.Legal Studies at Macquarie. In each of these instances, financial problems necessitated the student studying part-time. Two students attending interstate universities managed to gain acceptance in a preferred course because the quotas were less restrictive. Another travelled to New Zealand to enter medicine. Nine of the students in this group commenced their university studies in 1973, having accepted a deferment from this university while at the same time arranging to enter another university.

A majority of students in this group enrolled in courses similar to those in which they were granted deferment. For the most part these were students who had gained their first preference in their M.U.A.C. application. Thirteen changed their enrolment substantially but these included students who had been unsuccessful in obtaining their M.U.A.C. preference, e.g. they may have wanted to enter Medicine and have been given a place in Law as a third or fourth preference. Although taking a deferment in Law, they had little interest in that field of study. On consulting the print-out of M.U.A.C. offers, it becomes very apparent that many applicants rank their preferences in an unrealistic order without giving consideration to the suitability or otherwise, for them, of their lower preferences as career possibilities.

Some of the students in this group say they have changed their enrolment because employment prospects are better in their present course. For them a year's deferment has been long enough to assess job prospects, especially in the present employment climate.

When giving a reason for seeking deferment about a third of this group said they wanted to travel. Most of these did travel as did a number of others in the group. In fact almost half the total group travelled, either overseas or extensively in Australia. Several held travelling scholarships.

When asked what they had gained from their year's deferment respondents in this group said (i) they gained in maturity and personal development, (ii) the year provided them with an opportunity to define

their goals more clearly, and (iii) it provided a break from the routine of study after many years at school. Six say it assisted them financially. Three students who had already commenced study in 1975 saw their deferment as a second option should they decide they didn't like their present courses.

Most of the students in this group had no regrets about not coming to university in 1975, although they did have some reservations. Two commented that they would now be older when they graduated and another regretted not being able to enrol because she needed to study part-time. But the main reservation was the problem of settling down to a study routine after a year's break. However, this does not seem to have been an insurmountable obstacle.

After reading the responses of this particular group one is left with the impression that before seeking deferment they had thought quite seriously about coming to university and were already committed to tertiary study. However, they recognised that their experiences outside the school system had been very limited and that to continue on to university for a further four or more years would provide them with only a very narrow perspective on society. The decision to apply for deferment stems from a desire to experience life outside the somewhat rigid confines of the educational system - hence the high proportion of the group who travelled during the year. Their decision to enrol in other universities in 1976, rather than in this University was influenced largely by such factors as convenient locality, financial considerations, or the availability of a place in a preferred course at another university.

When asked what advice they would give to school leavers considering deferment, almost without exception, they recommended deferment. However, they emphasise the importance for the person concerned to do something worthwhile with the year and not to regard it as one long holiday. A few mention the need to consider the difficulties involved in obtaining employment at the present time. They stress that they, themselves, have benefitted greatly from the break from study.

(ii) Students attending other institutions

This group forms almost half our total sample and includes twelve nurses. They attend a wide range of institutions from C.A.E.s offering four-year degree courses to colleges offering very specialised vocational training e.g. a two-year full-time course in Medical Records

Administration. In 1975, the year in which they sought deferment from study, 24 of this group were already enrolled and studying full-time and a further 11 were studying part-time i.e. excluding the nurses, 60% of students attending non-university institutions in 1975 were already enrolled in 1975. This is a far higher proportion than in the previous group. For this reason the pattern of their responses is determined, to some extent, by whether they were enrolled in 1975 and did not, in fact, take a year's break from study. Those who in fact spent a year outside the educational system are likely to agree with those attending university in 1976 that deferment provides a much needed break from study and a chance to experience the outside world. Similarly they would recommend school leavers to defer their enrolment. On the other hand, those commencing their studies in 1975 regard deferment as an insurance providing them with another option should they find their present course unsatisfactory. This, however, was not the intention of the Admissions Committee in granting deferments: that committee stipulated that the applicant shall not be attending another degree-awarding tertiary institution. Deferring applicants in 1975 do not seem to have been aware of this otherwise they would have realised that they invalidated their deferment when they enrolled at these other institutions. However, most of them would have been admitted to their deferred course the following year by re-applying through N.U.A.C. unless they (i) had a record of failure at the institution attended or (ii) were rejected because of a more stringent quota restriction.

The group as a whole differs from the previous group in a number of ways. A larger proportion come from capital cities and those from Sydney reside in widely scattered localities, including the southern and eastern suburbs. Again, there are a number from small country towns and rural areas. (See Table 3)

Apart from those training to be nurses some 60% are studying in areas different from those in which their deferment was granted. They give a number of reasons for making this change. Eleven say that the course deferred was not their first preference or, for some, even their second or third. We did not ask specifically for this information in our questionnaire but reference to the N.U.A.C. offers for 1975 indicates that some 35% of the total respondents were unsuccessful in getting a place in their preferred course. This compares with 25% of the total applicants who applied through N.U.A.C.[5] Several stated that the job

market was poor in the area in which they had deferred - these include three deferring in Architecture. Others mention financial difficulties which necessitate them studying part-time.

Thirteen were enrolled in the same areas as that in which they deferred. Of these, however, eight were studying part-time or 'sandwich', five of them at the New South Wales Institute of Technology - this again is suggestive of financial difficulties.

Students in this group give a variety of reasons for seeking deferment but it is apparent that more of them experience financial hardship and need to work in order to support themselves. Although only 15 actually gave 'Finance' as their official reason for deferment, an analysis of the questionnaire responses reveals that others in this group were similarly disadvantaged. Eleven said they wanted to travel whereas only six did in fact travel. Other reasons for deferment were subsumed under the category 'Other' and included lack of maturity, goal uncertainty, etc. There are 23 students in this category of whom 13 were enrolled in courses in 1975 and seven had started their nursing training. Perhaps a more accurate reason for these might have been "Uncertain of suitability for university study".

There are a number of students in this group with H.S.C. aggregates below 480, particularly in comparison with those who returned to study in other universities in 1976. One might hypothesise that some of these see study in other post-secondary institutions as providing, for them, a more appropriate level of education. Of the 12 who started training to be nurses only three had aggregates in excess of 500.

The general impression one forms of this particular group of deferring students is that they are less committed to university study, of somewhat lower socio-economic status (with exceptions, of course) and liable to experience financial problems.

(iii) Students not attending any institution in 1976

Thirty-nine respondents indicated that they were not attending any institution at the time of the survey. These included one who had returned to study at the beginning of 1976 and had since withdrawn through ill health. They are much less homogenous than either of the previous groups.

Again the proportion of country residents is higher than that in the normal first year population (see Table 3). A number mention the present financial situation as it effects country areas and some spent 1975 working on properties. Although students in the previous group were more concerned with financial problems than the first group, for this group it presents an even more pressing problem. When seeking deferment in 1975 half of them gave 'Finance' as their reason. However, the questionnaire responses again indicate that it is a problem for more of them than would admit to it initially as it is apparent that others in the group found it necessary to work in order to support themselves. Although only one directly mentioned working for two years in order to qualify for independent status under the Tertiary Allowances Scheme it it likely that others also have this in mind.

Seven of them requested deferment in order to travel but only four actually travelled. Three said they wanted to work in 1975 so that they could travel in 1976. Two were still on travelling scholarships which spanned the northern academic year.

Most of the group worked during 1975, more than half being employed in clerical or sales positions. Seven held unskilled jobs. In 1976, most of them were still employed in the same position - one or two remarking that at the present time it would be unwise to leave their jobs even though they do not find them altogether satisfactory. This is in contrast to those who enrolled in 1976 after a year's break. Persons working during 1975 only are likely to have held several positions and to have spent part of the year unemployed.

What is particularly interesting about this group is that half of them expect to return to study in 1977. Only one said he had no intention of ever returning to study: the rest had expectations of returning at some unspecified future time. However, it is important not to place too much reliance on these replies because respondents are sometimes tempted to provide the answers which they think the researcher may be seeking. It is most unlikely that all those expressing an intention to enter tertiary education in 1977 will actually do so. Some most certainly will because they are already making application to various institutions. This group includes students still on travelling scholarships and others with high H.S.C. aggregates who have used the two years to clarify their goals and achieve financial independence. The recent changes introduced into the Tertiary Allowances Scheme may assist

these to return to study in 1977.

There are some regrets expressed by this group about not enrolling in 1975. As the break from study lengthens they see it becoming increasingly difficult to return to university or college and they recognise that they will be unqualified in a world where qualifications are held in high regard by employers. However, most of them do not regret the deferment and they, like the respondents who have returned to study, see the break from formal education in terms of increased maturity and a clearer appreciation of their own abilities.

When recommending advice for school leavers some express the reservation that deferment should not be for more than one year and others suggest that, although deferment has undoubted advantages for most people, for the school leaver who knows what career he wants to follow it might be better not to defer. Others say that deferment should not be seen as a way out of making a decision about a future career. It seems that there are some among this group who suspect their own motivation for study may be lessening but it is difficult to interpret the pertinent responses. After a break of almost two years some of the responses may be rationalisations.

DISCUSSION

Although only an average of 26% of deferring students have subsequently enrolled in the year following deferment at this University, the data gathered indicate that most of these persons do, in fact, continue on to some form of higher education. Others express their intention to do so at some future time: this suggests that there may well be students returning to the University of New South Wales after two or more years who are not listed on the Admissions Committee's file as 'enrolling deferments'.

Almost all deferring students see postponement of university study as being beneficial and if they had to make the decision again they would still defer. Most of them, although they appear not to realise it, did not need an official deferment: an application one year later through N.U.A.C. would have granted them entry to the course in which they deferred. The only ones likely to be disadvantaged by the lack of an official deferment would be one or two deferring in Medicine and Law, presuming the quota to become more restrictive each year. However, it seems that they, or perhaps their parents, like to have that 'piece of paper' as

a guarantee.

In considering the differences between students who enrol at university subsequently and those who enter other institutions, it appears that for many of those in the latter category the chance to defer enrolment has enabled them to discover what other courses are available. In consequence they may well take up studies more suited to their capabilities. Although there is little correlation between performance in the Higher School Certificate and at university for those with aggregates near the entry cut-off[6], particularly in the science-based faculties, the likelihood of their successfully completing university studies is in some doubt. Many of the students who entered other institutions have aggregages below 500: the mean of this group is 508 and this is biassed by the inclusion of several very high aggregate students such as one who deferred in Medicine in order to study music.

If students in this group have made a more realistic appraisal of their abilities and successfully complete their studies in other institutions, then this is both to their advantage, in that they do not become one more statistic in university failure rates, and to the University. Pearson[7], writing about the academic performance of deferring students compared to the normal intake in 1st year finds that students who deferred in 1974 are as likely to fail, withdraw, or change course as other students. If this is so and deferring does not appear to improve pass rates, at least it may prevent an increase in failure rates. It will be interesting to follow the performance of the students who deferred in 1975 and returned to this University in 1976. How will their performance compare to their non-deferring peers and to that of the deferring students in the Pearson Study?

At the present time the policy of the University is to grant deferments for one year and for that deferment to lapse if the applicant does not enrol the following year. Several of the respondents would have liked the opportunity to defer for more than one year, particularly those who travelled overseas. It appears that some of them were unaware of the admission policy of the University - they enrolled because they thought they would forfeit the opportunity for university study if they did not take up their offer. Others who did not enrol are concerned that they might not be able to gain entry to the University at some unspecified future time. If some students who enrol after a year's deferment subsequent change course or withdraw without failure one could presume that the year's

break has not provided an adequate period in which to clarify their goals and ambitions. Although the problems associated with a return to study increase as the years go by it is suggested that this is more than compensated by the increased level of commitment displayed by most older students.

At the present time the Admissions Section requires students who defer to give a reason for deferring and its policy is not to give a deferment to an applicant who is entering another tertiary institution or who offers no reason. The data show, beyond doubt, that many deferring students do not take a year off study but instead commence courses elsewhere. Because they are required to give a reason many of these may well be fabrications as they are already in the process of making applications to other institutions. If the University continues its present policy of encouraging students to defer, it is suggested that they should not be asked for a reason but allowed to defer by request only. It is unlikely that this would result in a greatly increased number of requests because those seeking deferment are apparently quite able to supply a spurious reason.

It has already been suggested that the University should give consideration to allowing deferments in excess of one year. It would not be much more difficult to devise a system whereby applicants who are successful in gaining entry to a particular faculty in any one year, should be able to gain a place in that faculty in any future year, not just the year following. This would help to ensure that when students did decide to enrol they would be more certain about what they wanted to do and more likely to complete their studies successfully. Although this might pose some problems for the faculties with restricted quotas it seems unlikely that students deferring for several years would all decide to enrol in the same year, thereby causing problems of staffing, accommodation, etc.

At the present time most university students enter straight from school - some because they really want to but others because it seemed to be the thing to do. However, if school leavers who achieved the appropriate level for entry into their preferred faculty were assured of entry into that faculty at a time of their own choosing, we might arrive at a situation when all students entering university would be doing so because they were committed to study that course. If the University

really believes that deferring is of considerable benefit to the student maybe it should follow the lead given by Sweden[8] and limit the number coming straight from school. Sweden is introducing a scheme whereby only the most able school leavers are offered direct entry and all other applicants are required to enter the workforce for one or more years. Bonus marks are awarded for each year since leaving school so that the applicant can accumulate 'entry points'. Although this scheme is designed primarily for selecting students from the lower ability levels, there is no reason why it should not be used to up-grade the entry qualifications of applicants from the higher ability levels. This would ensure that those wishing to enter faculties with quota restrictions would not be disadvantaged by delaying their enrolment for one or more years. Additionally it would lessen the pressure on all young school leavers to take studies before they are ready for fear of being unable to gain qualifications at some later date.

SUMMARY

The main findings of this study are listed below:-

1. Three quarters of deferring students who do not return to this University are likely to be enrolled in other educational institutions. Attendance is divided between universities and other institutions in the ratio of approximately four to seven respectively.

2. Students enrolling in other universities are likely to be committed to university study before deferring and to use the deferment as a break from study leading to increased maturity and offering the chance to experience the wider world.

3. Most of them are attending universities other than the University of New South Wales because they reside closer to that university.

4. Students attending other institutions are less committed to university study. Half of them enrolled in their institutions in 1975 and continued their studies in 1976.

5. This second group of students has a lower mean aggregate H.S.C. score compared with the first group and could be expected to have a better chance of successfully completing their present studies than if they had returned to the University. The deferred course is also less likely to be their first or even their second choice on their M.U.A.C.

application.

6. Those not enrolled this year are a more varied group; some are obviously committed to future university study while others may undertake less demanding courses. Almost half of them hope to enter a tertiary institution in 1977 and most of the remainder express an intention to return at some unspecified date.

7. Lack of finance, or the wish to be financially independent, is mentioned frequently in the responses, particularly in the last group i.e. those who have not yet enrolled.

8. There are more country students represented among deferring students than in the normal first year intake.

9. Almost all students who deferred say that they have benefitted in some way by their deferment e.g. they have matured, become more committed to study, are now more certain of their goals, etc.

10. Some of those who did not enrol in 1976 express misgivings about this as they see it becoming increasingly difficult to return to study as the years go by.

11. Many of the reasons given by students when requesting deferment are not genuine and this suggests that there is little to be gained in requiring reasons to be given.

12. A number of applicants would have liked the option to defer for more than one year.

REFERENCES

1. University of Melbourne, Admissions Policy Working Group Report. February, 1976, pp. 18-19.

2. Ibid. p. 20.

3. Professorial Board Resolution 73/267. 6th November, 1973. University of New South Wales.

4. Unpublished data supplied by Mr. C. Barnard, Project Officer, The A.V.C.C. survey of student social characteristics and the effect of fee abolition.

5. Metropolitan Universities Admissions Centre, Seventh Report 1975, Sydney.

6. L.H.T. West & R. Slamowicz, "The Invalidity of the Higher School Certificate as a Tertiary Selection Device", Vestes, 19, 2, 1976, pp. 8-11.

7. Margot Pearson, "Student Deferments at the University of New South Wales - 1971-1976". (In press)

8. B. Ostegren, "Swedish Higher Education to be Broadened", Current Sweden, No. 92, 1975, p. 5.

APPENDIX 1

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

TERTIARY EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE

Questionnaire for Persons Deferring University Study in 1975

August 1976

NAME .....

PRESENT ADDRESS: .....

.....

As it is possible that you may move from your present address within the next year or so, would you please supply us with an alternative address to that above so that we can reach you should the need arise.

.....

.....

1. Are you currently enrolled in an educational institution? Yes/No

If you answered YES - please specify name of the institution.

.....

If NO - please go to Q. 6

If YES - please answer Qs. 2 - 5 inclusive

2. What course of study are you now taking?

.....

3. In what course did you originally seek enrolment?

.....

If you answer to Q.3 is different to Q. 2 why did you change your enrolment?

4. What did you do last year? (e.g. type of job, travel, study, etc.)

5. What do you feel you have gained from your year's deferment?

GO TO Q. 18

(Qs. 6 - 9 are for persons who answered NO to Q.1)

6. What did you do last year? (e.g. type of job, travel study, etc.)

7. And what are you doing now?

8. Why did you decide not to enrol this year?

9. Do you intend to take up tertiary study at a later date? Yes/No

If YES - When? .....

If NO - Please give your reasons

P.T.O.

10. Do you have any regrets about not enrolling in 1975?

(Please comment)

11. What advice would you give to a school leaver who was considering deferment?

12. Any other comments?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX 2

SELECTED QUOTATIONS

The following quotations have been selected from the questionnaire responses. They have been grouped under various headings and give the reader some indication as to what the respondents think about deferment, particularly as it effects them.

Gained from deferment

A chance to do what I really want - see what it was like and make a decision from there.

I felt more sure of taking the course I am now doing having had more time to look into it on a casual basis.

I find it now very strange to think that anyone can really know themselves or what they wish to do immediately on finishing school.

I feel I know what it is I want in life and I feel that from my year's deferment the experience gained in that time of what life in today's workforce is like when you have no specific qualifications and no experience has made me realize the need for further education.

Although it took a while to settle down after coming home (from overseas) I felt enthusiastic about starting university as I was more aware of the fact that it was a matter of free choice and not just a continuation of school.

I'm not as influenced by the pressure exerted on me by my school to take on a demanding university course (because of good H.S.C. results) and now want to learn those things which interest me, not necessarily the subjects in which I scored highly.

I'm not so influenced by the pressure exerted on me by my school.

Had more time to think about what I wanted to do so decided an Economics degree would be more beneficial than an Arts degree.

I decided Engineering wasn't a suitable profession for me. Also agricultural science (which interests me more) has more avenues for employment.

I have the experience and reassuring knowledge that I can and have got along in the outside world.

Deferment as 'Insurance'

No, for if I had failed 1st year I would have had the chance of either repeating 1st year at Teachers College or going to Uni.

The course was not the course I wanted but was there in case I missed out altogether.

The reason I enrolled for Commerce was because I wished to be sure of a place in some tertiary course.

.....because I wanted the option of taking Architecture if I did not like Graphic Design.

The sense of security that comes from knowing that I had another option.

.....I was unsure how I would fit into the teaching situation. If this did not suit me I would have the opportunity to attend University the following year, for an alternative career.

I applied for deferment in case I did not find the Institute course as I would have expected, in which case I would have changed to the Uni. course.

Both are to do with the sciences, but I wished to attempt a totally different field and if I did not like the course I still had the alternative of going back to University and enrolling in Optometry.

Disadvantages of deferring

.....school leavers who defer, should no doubt allow for the same sort of lag when re-commencing study. It is hard to leave the freedom and go back into the controlled routine. It is even harder to leave the money.....

I think a lot depends on the job situation at the time of deferment as it can be very disillusioning to take off a year without deriving even some financial benefit, if not anything else.

.....after a year you have lost the technique of study and it takes a while to get "back into the swing of things."

Financial reasons for deferment

(At other Institution) Another reason why myself and others I know have deferred is to earn some money to help put ourselves through the courses we wish to do. For many courses now only Tertiary Assistance (means tested) is available and many students do not receive assistance because of their parents' income.

I couldn't support myself financially and go to Uni. at the same time. I decided to try for an independent student allowance and enrol at a later date.

I cannot afford to study with no (or very little) income.

I decided that full-time study was beyond my economic resources.

Tertiary Assistance is not adequate. It has not kept up with the rise in the cost of living.

Regrets

(Not enrolled) The only adverse thing is that often people treat you as a little "dumb" for not continuing study - employers, student friends, and sometimes even adults. It's a left-over from the "elitist" idea I think, but its probably lessening.

Now I have no regrets. During 1975 I did have some regrets but I can see for me, my decision has been the right one so I no longer regret not enrolling in 1975. After all I can always apply for enrolment in later years if that is what I really want to do. (Student at Sydney Teach.)

No, I needed time to grow up, do things I wanted to for a long time and think seriously about my career.

No, but appreciated the opportunity to leave my options open by deferring.

Advice to School-leavers

Don't bother having a year off for the sake of it. Definitely defer (if possible) if you want to work in some situation to earn money, get life in perspective and get your head together about what you really want to do.

To go ahead and defer - the year is not lost but rather gives the student a break from study, a chance to re-examine the course he/she wishes to undertake and over all helps the person to mature.

If a school leaver was seriously thinking of deferment I would encourage them to do so. All you know is the school and the security it affords. In order to grow you need this year off to experience other aspects of life. Whether it is intentional or not many parents force their children into a particular field and by having a year off you can become more certain of what you really want to do without this parental pressure.

(Nurse), definitely defer. Unfortunately students seem to get illusions of grandeur going straight from school. Humility is an important lesson to learn from the working world.